

DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

DECEMBER 2024 | LUKE 24:44-47

'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'

Luke 24: 46-47, ESV

FORGIVENESS OF SIN

In the last chapter of Luke, after He was resurrected, we find Jesus taking a trip. Some disciples are walking down to Emmaus, and they're rehearsing all the terrible things that have happened that weekend. They're full of depression and rejection and disappointment. Jesus walks along incognito and opens their eyes to the Scripture and shows them how all of Scripture relates to Him. The text says that their hearts burned within them when they heard it. (See Luke 24:32). They've never had the word explained like that. After

this encounter, Jesus meets with His disciples several more times, and then He commissions them. What did He commission His disciples to do?

Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and he said to them,

'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'

Luke 24: 44-47, ESV

The heart of the gospel is the proclamation of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the key. What was Jesus doing on the cross? He was forgiving sinners. He was expressing the mercy of God in such a way that alienated, rebellious, ignorant sinners could be reunited back to God, reconciled to God, restored to God, and become the people of God that God had wanted when He made Adam and Eve and put them on the earth as His partners. Forgiveness eradicates everything that keeps a person from being related to God. A human is supposed to relate to God with no guilt, no fear, no shame, no condemnation, no accusation and no sense of sin. That's the only way we can relate to God in such a way

that we are confident that we can hear His voice and know that He's guiding us. It is the only way we can be sure that we are enjoying His intimacy. So when Jesus commissioned His disciples, He sent them out to proclaim forgiveness.

But why is unforgiveness such a blight and condemned so strongly by the scriptures? Unforgiveness at its essence is a demand to have the role of God. It is believing that I have enough of the facts to make my decision, close out the court case, and declare guilty or innocent based on what I know. Unforgiveness is basically a claim to omniscience - knowing all. It is arrogantly taking God's role as Judge into our own feeble hands. Unforgiveness assumes that we are the ones that God has made responsible to vindicate justice. Like bitterness, unforgiveness blights my own soul. It shuts down all creativity. It shuts down any capacity to relate to God. It shuts down gifts. My focus becomes on punishing. It becomes like a record player, rehearsing the narrative of pain

and injustice. Taken to its end, unforgiveness causes the unforgiven to take center stage in life, rather than God. One can't be bitter at a person and loving toward God at the same time because the focus must shift to one or the other.

On the other hand, forgiveness requires a belief that God is going to bring about ultimate justice. It is trusting Him with all the wrongs, pains, and injustices we face, knowing that He is the final, perfect arbiter. Whether we can see justice fulfilled or not, we have the promise that God is a God of justice. We see this truth ultimately played out on the cross as He followed through on His commitment to justice even in the death of His Son. If God were to overlook the injustices of sin, that payment would never have had to be made. Yet Jesus paid, and so God demonstrated that He never neglects justice. There will come the time when all wrongs will be made right and all sadness will become untrue. This is God's commitment to us.

The story of Mary Magdalene in Scripture highlights the transformative power of forgiveness. Mary was in bondage. Scripture tells us that she had demons and was a prostitute or madam. She was a sinner, and yet Jesus set her free. She was so changed by being forgiven that it affected the rest of her life. She was transformed by forgiveness. In the same way, when we are aware of how much we are forgiven, we live radically different lives marked by a willingness to forgive others. In our daily lives, we are forgiving toward those who hurt and offend us in direct proportion to our awareness of having and being forgiven. Mary Magdalene was forgiven a lot. She knew she'd been forgiven a lot and couldn't help but to express her gratitude to Jesus by anointing His feet. She was living generously by giving what she had.

We see how radically her life was changed in the story of Jesus' resurrection when Mary Magdalene reached His tomb and found it empty. In her frantic search for

Jesus' body, she had a powerful encounter with the resurrected Jesus. Forgiveness put her in the right place so that Jesus could reveal Himself to her so that the desires of her heart would be met. Jesus wasn't going to let her live with deception and speculation. So he did what he does to all of us. He called her by name and revealed Himself to her.

Injustices and pain happen to all of us. Mean people do mean things. Ignorant people do ignorant things. Prejudiced people do prejudiced things. Unthoughtful people say unthoughtful things. If you live in this world, you will be offended and hurt. You can try to sort all that out and make everybody pay, but if you do, you'll be the prisoner.

Alternatively, you can experience this part of His grace: He grants you forgiveness. And with the forgiveness, He gives you the ability to see the situation differently. Instead of interpreting an empty tomb as: "someone has stolen the

Lord," your response can be: "The tomb is empty. My Lord is resurrected and being resurrected. He is ascended and is the Sovereign Judge. I don't have to be."

That's what grace and forgiveness does to our hearts. We are forgiven and therefore we are free to forgive. We are free to entrust justice to a higher court. We are free to live. We have been given the capacity to forgive like Jesus forgives. We can interpret reality through a new lens and experience the joy and transformation that comes as we forgive in Jesus' name.

**KERYGMA VENTURES**

P.O. Box 2022
Colleyville, TX 76034
(817)267-9224
Email: Contact@kerygmaventures.com
www.KerygmaVentures.com